TED Notes: Fascinating talks Tuesday at the conference in Vancouver

Postmedia Breaking News

March 18, 2014 Tuesday

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Section: ONLINE

Length: 658 words

Body

New mammoths for modern issue?

It may not be too long before woolly mammoths begin to repopulate the Canadian Arctic, Stewart Brand, the "de-extinction" pioneer and advocate told TED attendees. New research is being done by scientists all over the world looking into taking the DNA of extinct or threatened animals to recreate, or in some cases bolster, the populations of animals. From the elephant-like mammoth to the passenger pigeon, to a "genetic rescue" mission for the endangered black-footed ferret, there is promising research for why these animals should be preserved, he said. "You could some day see vast herds of new Canadians or returned Canadians in the arctic. We may need them back," Brand said, arguing mammoths may help reverse global warming.

A new golden age of sail

Along that line, "de-extinction" author and historian George Dyson, a former Vancouver boat builder and self-proclaimed hippie, wants to bring back the age of sail. He argues that technology has solved many of the reasons why sailing ships fell victim to steam powered transportation. Today, he said, bringing back such energy efficient and green power makes sense.

Ocean is heart of the planet

Oceanographer Sylvia Earle, who won a Ted Prize in 2009 in a passionate plea to keep the world's ocean life from going extinct in the first place, said she's seeing small successes in her Mission Blue campaign. But she says time is running out, and people need to act now if they want to protect both their world and their lives. "The most important thing we extract from the ocean is our existence. If you like to breathe, take care of the ocean." she said. "The ocean is the blue heart of the planet. How much of your heart do you want to protect?" She wants people to nominate their favourite ocean or marine spaces that they believe should be protected as parks, just as the U.S. has created the national park system, a creation no one today would say was a bad idea.

Subliminal clues fascinate

David Kwong develops crossword puzzles for the New York Times. A self-identified "cruciverbalist" (crossword designer), he argues that from birth people are exposed to, and then subliminally aware of clues. He demonstrated that accurately in his TED talk, accurately predicting the colours a volunteer from the audience used to colour shapes on an easel, all of which he'd subliminally offered during his 18-minute speech. To top it off, he was so confident in his thesis that he wrote it into the design of today's New York Times crossword puzzle. Figure that out.

Design cities for people

In her former job as the chief planner for New York City under mayor Michael Bloomberg, Amanda Burden helped breath new life into some of the city's rundown areas. Many of the things she put in place, such as transit-oriented development, are echoed in Vancouver. She told TED attendees that great cities "are fundamentally about people.

... A successful city is like a fabulous party - people stay because they're having a great time." On Sunday, Burden was given a private tour of Vancouver's Southeast False Creek by city staff.

Clarion call to protect water

It is coincidental that photographer Edward Burtynsky, another TED Prize winner, has an exhibit about his favourite subject, water, at the Vancouver Art Gallery. His new documentary film, Watermark, is a clarion call for the world to protect its vanishing water resources. He played a clip for the TED audience. The VAG is screening his film every other day as part of his A Terrible Beauty exhibition of 44 images.

Stroke talk ups brain knowledge

Neuroanatomist Jill Bolte Taylor's 2008 talk about discovering she was going through a stroke - and her onstage display of a human brain - was the first TED Talk to go viral. It has been seen more than 15 million times. In a reprise in the All-Stars session Tuesday, she says that talk has helped propel peoples' understanding of how brains work.

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Load-Date: March 18, 2014